

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW

**NATIONAL  
AGENCY FOR  
QUALITY  
ASSESSMENT AND  
ACCREDITATION  
OF SPAIN (ANECA)**

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**enqa.**

European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the compliance of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation/ Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA) with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) parts 2 and 3. The report is based on an ENQA targeted peer review, following the methodology described in the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews and considering the *Use and Interpretation of the ESG* by the EQAR's Register Committee. In addition to the agency and its stakeholders, the report is meant to provide information for the ENQA Board's decision on ANECA's continued membership and to EQAR to support the agency's reapplication to the register.

The external targeted review was conducted from October 2021 to September 2022, with a site visit of the review panel in charge of the evaluation taking place between May 24 and 26 2022.

ANECA is a mature and well-established agency, member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2003 and registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 2008, aiming to 'independently promote the quality assurance of the Higher Education System in Spain and its continuous and innovative improvement through guidance, evaluation, certification and accreditation processes, thus contributing to the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area'<sup>[1]</sup>. Its vision is 'to be recognised nationally and internationally as a benchmark of good practices in the field of quality assurance for Higher Education Systems, fulfilling its mission according to defined values; all with a clear service focus for the society in general'<sup>[1]</sup>.

ANECA's main activities are related to external quality assurance of programmes and institutions: four types of procedures are implemented at programme level, other four at institutional level and three procedures are related to academic staff evaluation (which do not fall under the scope of this ENQA review).

The ESG specifically addressed in this targeted review are *2.6 Reporting* and *3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance*, which were found partially compliant at the last EQAR Register Committee's renewal decision and standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the new activities introduced, i.e., Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International. At the same time, ESG 2.1 is analysed for all the activities of the agency, and ESG 3.6 is particularly tackled as a selected enhancement area.

The panel considered the evidence given in the self-assessment report, additional evidence requested by the panel and provided by the agency (full list of additional documentation is in Annex 4) and performed an onsite site visit where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held. The panel thoroughly analysed and discussed all the evidence and concluded that ANECA complies with the ESG as presented below.

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<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.aneca.es/en/mission-vision-and-values>

### Summary of agency's compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3)

ESG	Compliance according to the targeted review of 2022 <sup>1</sup>	Compliance transferred from the last full review of 2017 <sup>2</sup>
2.1	Compliant	N/A
2.2	Compliant (for new QA activities only)	Fully compliant → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
2.3	Compliant (for new QA activities only)	Fully compliant → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
2.4	Compliant (for new QA activities only)	Fully compliant → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
2.5	Compliant (for new QA activities only)	Fully compliant → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
2.6	Compliant	
2.7	Compliant (for new QA activities only)	Fully compliant → Compliant (for QA activities reviewed during the previous full review only)
3.1	Compliant	
3.2	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.3	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.4	Not included in the targeted review	Substantially compliant → Compliant
3.5	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.6	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.7	Not included in the targeted review	Fully compliant → Compliant

Overall, the review panel found ANECA to be compliant with the ESG.

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<sup>1</sup> Compliance refers to the focus areas that were evaluated in depth and are part of the Terms of Reference, i.e., standards that were only partially compliant with the ESG during the last full review, ESG Part 2 for newly introduced or changed QA activities of the agency, ESG 2.1 for all QA activities and any standard affected by substantive changes since the last full review. If any of the standards of Part 2 of the ESG are covered due to the newly introduced or changed QA activities, a remark “for new or changed QA activities only” is added in brackets to the compliance assessment.

<sup>2</sup> Compliance refers to the last EQAR Register Committee decision for renewal of inclusion on the Register. Compliance refers to the QA activities of the agency that were reviewed during the previous full review.

# INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of ANECA (National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation/ Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted in 12 months, from October 2021 to September 2022 and should be read together with the external review report of the agency's last full review against the ESG.

## BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

### BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

Registration on EQAR is the official instrument established by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for demonstrating an agency's ESG compliance. An external review is a prerequisite for registration.

ANECA is member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2003 and registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 2008. As ANECA has undergone three successful reviews against the ESG Parts 2 and 3, it is eligible and has opted for a targeted review. The purpose of a targeted review is to ensure the agency's compliance with the ESG by covering standards that were found partially compliant during the agency's last renewal of registration in EQAR and on standards that could have been affected by substantive changes<sup>3</sup> during the past five years while at the same time further strengthening the enhancement part of the review.

This targeted review and the findings of the panel are used for renewal of both ANECA's ENQA membership and its listing on EQAR.

### SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

From the beginning of the review process, the panel took note of the terms of reference (ToR) set for the scope of the review. The following external quality assurance activities conducted by ANECA are deemed to be within scope:

- Programme level
  - VERIFICA
  - MONITOR
  - ACREDITA
  - International Quality Labels (SIC): (\*)
    - EUR-ACE
    - Euro-Inf
    - EUROBACHELOR / EUROMASTER
  - Joint programme accreditation
- Institutional level
  - AUDIT

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<sup>3</sup> e.g. organisational changes, the launch of new external QA activities.

- INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION
- DOCENTIA
- AUDIT INTERNATIONAL

(\*) Additional activities of ANECA are currently in the design phase, i.e., WFME and ENPHI international labels, therefore these activities have not been addressed in this report.

The following activities of ANECA are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Academic Staff Recruitment Assessment Programme (PEP)
- ACADEMIA
- CNEAI
- International projects
- Other assessments that do not relate to teaching & learning in higher education.

This report also deals with each of the focus areas below (ToR, page 2 and 3):

1. Standards with a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision:
  - a. *ESG 2.6 Reporting;*
  - b. *ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance.*
2. Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the following activities:
  - a. AUDIT International;
  - b. Institutional Accreditation.
3. *ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance for all activities within the scope of the ESG;*
4. Selected enhancement area: *ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct.*

For the ToR, please see Annex 2. For the glossary of terms used, please see Annex 3.

## MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2017 REVIEW

The previous ENQA coordinated review took place in 2017. With respect to the ESG (2015) it found ANECA fully compliant with all the standards except for ESG 2.6 (Reporting) and ESG 3.4 (Thematic analysis), where the agency was found substantially compliant.

The 2017 review also listed several points of attention as recommendations to ANECA on specific standards:

- To continue to analyse the data and information emerging from evaluations conducted and in particular the evaluation of programmes, and to expand the range of thematic reports published on the Spanish quality assurance system (ESG 3.4);
- An annual IQA report to be published, primarily aimed at an internal readership and at developing an institutional memory of changes and developments (ESG 3.6);
- To continue and extend its efforts to include international experts in review panels (ESG 2.4);
- To include all the valuable information contained in the 'long' reports in the published reports (ESG 2.6).

EQAR considered the ENQA external review report (2017) and concurred with the conclusion that ANECA complied with all standards except for ESG 3.1 and 2.6, that were considered partially compliant.

After the external review in 2017, ANECA was granted ENQA membership for five years and inclusion on the EQAR Register until 31 October 2022.

In 2019, the agency submitted to ENQA a follow-up report on recommendations in the panel report, which was approved by the ENQA Board.

In 2021, the agency submitted to EQAR a substantive change report for introducing two new external quality assurance activities: Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International. The Register Committee accepted the first activity with no concerns and made remarks on the latter related to the following standards: ESG 2.3 (Implementing processes), 2.4 (Peer-review experts), 2.5 (Criteria for outcomes) and 3.4 (Thematic analysis).

The panel therefore acknowledges, in this report, the status of the ESG standards that were found to be in compliance with the ESG during the last full review, at the same time addressing the EQAR's remarks on AUDIT INTERNATIONAL.

## REVIEW PROCESS

The 2022 external targeted review of ANECA was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*, the EQAR Procedures for Applications, and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the targeted review of ANECA was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Ms. Laura Beccari (Chair), International Affairs Officer and Project Manager at The Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance, Switzerland - ENQA nominee;
- Prof. Dr. Simona Lache (Secretary), Professor and Vice-rector for Internationalisation and Quality Evaluation at Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania - EUA nominee;
- Mr. Damian Michalik, PhD candidate in Physics at University of Warsaw, Poland, member of the European Students' Union Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool - ESU nominee.

Ms. Milja Homan (project and reviews officer at ENQA), acted as the review coordinator.

ANECA produced a self-assessment report (SAR) that provided the basis for the panel's work. Panel members received the SAR from ANECA on the first of April 2022 and immediately began to evaluate its contents according to the provisions of the ToR. The panel's kick-off session took place online, on 13 May 2022, and it was followed, in the same day, by the clarification meeting with the agency's resource person to clarify the agency's changes since the last full review against the ESG and to understand the background and motive of the agency's choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (next to the overall HE and QA context of the agency). The review panel's pre-visit meeting and preparations for day 1 were organised in person, one day before the site visit (i.e., 23 May 2022). The panel conducted an onsite visit to ANECA from 24 to 26 May 2022, where it further examined both the claims made in the self-assessment report and cross-checked other evidence as provided by the agency. The panel was also able to clarify any points at issue. During the site visit, the simultaneous translation was provided (when needed) by two professional interpreters ENQA approved in advance. Finally, the review panel produced the external review report based on the following sources: the SAR, additional information provided by the agency upon the panel's request, information collected during the site visit, and other evidence (e.g., website, previous external evaluation reports). In doing so, the panel provided an opportunity for ANECA to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report. The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and persons it wished to consult throughout the review process.

### **Self-assessment report**

As mentioned in the introduction of the SAR, the self-assessment report is the result of a 'global, participative and self-critical' process, widely communicated within the agency from the beginning (January 2021). It presents the changes in the agency since 2017, when the last full review took place,



introduces the new external evaluation activities, and tackles the developments mainly in the focus areas related to the compliance with ESG part 3 (i.e., ESG 3.1) and part 2 (i.e., ESG 2.1 and 2.6 for all the activities and ESG 2.2 – ESG 2.5, ESG 2.7 for the new activities since the last full review). The SAR also includes an extensive reference to ESG 3.6 (Internal quality assurance and professional conduct), selected as enhancement area, complemented by a separate document provided by ANECA to the review panel consisting in a short explanation on the agency's expectations on ESG 3.6 in the targeted review. A SWOT analysis and a description of key challenges and areas for future development conclude the report.

The SAR was prepared by a team appointed by ANECA management, consisting of staff from the Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit and the Institutional and Programme Evaluation Division, which included participants from the last external review. The draft prepared by the team was shared with a first group of internal stakeholders (agency Director, chairperson of the Internationalisation Committee, student, and employers' representatives in the Governing Council) for feedback. In the second round of consultations, contributions to the SAR were received from all members of the Governing Council, all categories of external experts (academics, students, professionals), Internationalisation Committee members, all staff members and management team. The SAR was discussed with key stakeholders and at the agency level, so that it achieved a good knowledge of the findings.

The review panel found the SAR to be informative and reflective, as the findings allowed the agency to identify its strengths and weaknesses, current challenges, and areas for further development. The panel read it in conjunction with the documents of the previous ENQA full review (SAR, ERR, etc.) and with other additional material requested to the agency, in order to get a complete image and understanding of ANECA and its operation.

### **Site visit**

The site visit was conducted in person from 24 to 26 May 2022, and prior to that, a pre-visit meeting took place among the panel members on 23 May 2022, as is presented in the visit schedule (Annex I). The visit schedule was agreed upon with the agency. The panel found the visit to be well planned and organised, thus the review panel was able to meet and interview all key internal and external stakeholders of the agency, including the ANECA's director, representatives of the Senior Management Team and Governing Council, the Internationalization Committee President, staff in charge of external QA activities, administrative staff, representative of the Ministry of Universities and Ministry of Finance, heads and QA officers from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), members of the experts' pool, including international experts, students involved in external QA activities, and other stakeholders. The discussions in the meetings were triangulated with the self-assessment report and the documentary evidence as provided by the agency in advance, which altogether allowed the panel to come to conclusions and judgements on the compliance as presented in this report.

The panel wishes to convey its thanks to all involved parties that dedicated their time to meet with and help the panel to better understand the activities of ANECA and the context within which it operates. The frankness of communication and the openness shown by the interviewees are highly appreciated.

The staff of the agency showed commitment during the entire review process and provided assistance to the panel regarding all matters. At the end of the site visit, the panel held an internal meeting, where agreed on the preliminary conclusions on the level of compliance of ANECA on each of the ESG standards under the scope of the targeted review. At the same time, the panel discussed the main findings on ESG 3.6 and formulated suggestions for enhancement accordingly. All of this was reported orally to the agency during the final debriefing session. The panel secretary

drafted the report in cooperation with the rest of the panel. The draft report was submitted to ANECA for fact checking at the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2022 and then finalised and sent to ENQA at the end of September 2022.

## CHANGES WITHIN THE AGENCY

### HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The higher education system and quality assurance system in Spain have been recently impacted by the publication of two laws: 1) the Royal Decree 640/ 2021, of 28 July, which provides regulations to the creation, recognition and authorisation of universities and university centres, and institutional accreditation of university centres, and 2) the Royal Decree 822/ 2021, of 28 September, which establishes the organisation of university programmes and the procedure for quality assurance.

The Royal Decree 420/2015, of 29 May, established institutional accreditation for university centres as an alternative to the model for ex-post accreditation for university degree programmes; since that date a first stage has been implemented (initial Institutional Accreditation - regulated drawing on synergies from accreditation renewal for Bachelor's and Master's Degrees combined with those from the certification process for the implementation of internal quality assurance systems). This stage does not entail an additional evaluation but merely requires the verification by the QA agency that the centre has passed the ex-post accreditation processes for its degree programmes and the centre has been certified for its internal quality assurance system. The second stage, consisting of the renewal of Institutional Accreditation for university centres, requires an external review by the QA agency but it could not start due to the lack of normative framework. The regulatory norms that should have followed the Royal Decree 640/ 2021, of 28 July, were adopted and the implementation of the renewal process for those centres that obtained their initial accreditation in 2018 would start in 2024.

The second law mentioned above, the Royal Decree 822/2021, introduced more flexibility related to quality assurance procedures; the changes in the legislation allow for a recognition of review report issued by another EQAR listed agency, provided that it follows the European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, which is a significant progress in the Spanish and European higher education system, as related to the provision of joint degrees and their quality assurance.

### ANECA'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

There have been no major changes in the structure or organisation of ANECA, since the review in 2017. The organisation chart, the description of the functions and the composition of each of the bodies, as well as ANECA's internal structure are published on the agency's website, <https://www.aneca.es/en/structure>.

In 2020 a new management team was appointed, following the provisions from the Articles of Association, but no structural changes occurred in the agency.

ANECA currently operates according to the strategic plan developed for the period 2019-2023, slightly reviewed in 2020, based on the new director's vision. The 2020 revision of the strategic plan focused mainly on three directions: 1) transparency, 2) follow up; 3) Internationalisation. More details on this subject are presented in Part II of this report, under the ESG 3.1.

Starting with March 2020, due to the pandemic of COVID-19, the agency had to reconsider its operation mode and teleworking was established for internal staff and all evaluation committees; at the same time, activities related to site visits to universities, training of experts, etc., started to be

conducted online. At the moment of the review panel’s site visit to ANECA, the hybrid working method was still in place, with some activities having been conducted in person and some online.

## ANECA’S FUNDING

There have been no significant changes in the funding of the agency since the previous full review in 2017. Since the SAR does not provide information on this subject, the review panel relies on the 2017 ERR when stating that ANECA is an autonomous public body governed by the Royal Decree 1112/2015, of 11 December, and entirely funded by the Spanish Government. Additional revenues may be deriving from international agreements, contracts for commissioned reviews/ other QA activities.

## ANECA’S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

Since the ENQA review in 2017, two new evaluation procedures were started and implemented, under the scope of the ESG:

- Institutional Accreditation
- AUDIT International.

The context of the Institutional Accreditation has been already explained under the previous section on *Higher education and quality assurance system*. Its main goal is to strengthen the autonomy of the HEIs which demonstrate their commitment to quality assurance by having in place certified internal quality assurance systems and 50% of their degree programmes accredited. In addition, it is expected to decrease the bureaucratic burden for the universities related to the external quality assurance processes, as they will have to subject to external evaluation only half of their programmes instead of all, which it is the rule for HEIs which are not institutionally accredited.

While the first phase of the procedure (i.e., initial Institutional Accreditation) has been implemented since 2018, only recently the second phase (i.e., renewal of Institutional Accreditation) has been included in the legal framework and the whole process is foreseen to start in 2024. The panel learned from the interviews that ANECA is going to organise, in June 2022, an information event for universities on this subject.

The AUDIT International procedure has developed in response to the request of various international organisations to certify the implementation of the internal quality assurance system in HEIs located in third countries regions. The procedure applies the same methodology as the AUDIT Spain, which may be adapted to the local context, laws, and regulations.

Table I presents the number of procedures conducted by ANECA since the two new external quality assurance activities have been launched.

Table I. Number of new procedures conducted by ANECA

EQA activity / Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	<b>Total</b>
Institutional Accreditation (initial)	-	23	9	5	8	<b>45</b>
AUDIT International	2	9	8	8	6	<b>33</b>

The panel notes that ANECA is working on developing procedures based on the common methodology of International Quality Labels (SIQ) for: 1) Distance and Blended Education Label (ENPHI®), 2) International Quality Label for WFME Medical Studies, 3) Label of Excellence in Inclusion with a Label for Inclusion of People with Disabilities and 4) Employability and Entrepreneurship Label. All these activities are still in the design phase and pilot evaluations are carried out; therefore, they have not been addressed in the current targeted review.

# FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF ANECA WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG) WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

## ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

### ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

**2017 review recommendation:** none

**2017 EQAR Register Committee's conclusion:** "The Committee acknowledged the steps taken by ANECA to clarify the nature of its international activities but noted that these activities were not considered by an external review panel (in particular in considering compliance with ESG Part 2). The Register Committee further noted that it could not analyse with full certainty how the agency separates its external QA activities within the scope of the ESG from the consultancy projects it carries out. The Register Committee therefore remained unable to concur with the review panel's conclusion (full compliance) and considered, after taking into account the clarification received, that ANECA only partially complies with standard 3.1."

#### Evidence

ANECA is an autonomous organisation founded by the Spanish government in 2001, based on the Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December. As defined in its Statute, the agency's activities are of evaluation, certification and accreditation of programmes, institutions, and teaching staff; these activities are also reflected in its mission, which is "to independently promote the quality assurance of the Higher Education System in Spain and its continuous and innovative improvement through guidance, evaluation, certification and accreditation processes, thus contributing to the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This activity is complemented by ANECA's commitment to society by providing information and thus earning the confidence of our stakeholders."

The mission, vision, and values of ANECA are published on its website, where are also publicly available the associated documents: the strategic plan, annual operational plans, and annual activity reports. The agency is led by a director appointed every three years, according to the organisation's Statute. When a new director comes in charge, the strategic plan might be revised based on his/ her vision. For example, the current Director in charge at ANECA has set as strategic objectives: 1) transparency, 2) follow up; 3) internationalisation, which are in line with the strategic plan developed for the period 2019-2023.

The SAR (page 10) provides information on external quality assurance activities by year, thus proving the regularity and volume of procedures conducted, see the table below.

Table 2. Number of evaluations carried out in ANECA procedures

Year	PROGRAMME EVALUATION							INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION			
	VERIFICA	MONITOR	ACREDITA	SIC				INSTITUTIONAL ACREDITATION	DOCENTIA	AUDIT	AUDIT INTERNATIONAL
				EUR-ACE	EURO-INFO	EUROBACHELOR	EUROMASTER				
2016	219	77	239	25	5	0	0	-	4	13	-
2017	241	159	251	27	4	0	0	-	4	8	2
2018	165	102	213	54	1	0	0	23	20	22	9
2019	218	32	276	54	17	2	0	9	6	20	8
2020	215	37	164	60	16	4	0	5	9	26	8
2021	719	66	111	153	22	10	0	8	8	24	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.777</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>1.254</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>33</b>

The agency explained that, during the assessment period, the Joint programme activity did not receive any request for assessment, therefore it was not included in the table.

ANECA's core activity is evaluation of study programmes and of quality assurance systems of higher education in Spain, as a basis for accreditation decisions. From the interview with the Director and the resource person the panel learned that the agency conducted external evaluations in around 20 HEIs situated in the regions of Spain under its area of competence; this number could, however, vary since ANECA may perform activities in other jurisdictions, as far as they are "evaluation functions and those leading to the validation and accreditation without detriment to those developed by other State or Autonomous Communities evaluation agencies"<sup>[2]</sup>.

In addition to the mandatory activities related to programme evaluation (VERIFICA, MONITOR, ACREDITA), ANECA offers voluntary procedures in the view of awarding international quality labels (SIC): EUR-ACE, EURO-INFO, EUROBACHELOR AND EUROMASTER.

All these activities are described in detail within the SAR of the previous ENQA full review (2017) and related information is publicly available on the website.

Two new procedures have been added since the previous review in 2017: Institutional accreditation and AUDIT International. They are both explained in the SAR and the panel could learn details from the extensive description provided on the website.

AUDIT International has been developed following the request of the higher education institutions from abroad, especially Latin America, which ANECA previously started collaboration with for awarding international quality labels (EUR-ACE). During the interview with the Director and the management team the panel learned that the strategic priority of internationalisation is also supported by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, i.e., expanding capacity building to universities from Latin America and developing accompanying instruments for these activities. For example, INTERCOONECTA project offers free of charge information to Latin American HEIs and

<sup>[2]</sup> Organic Law on Universities (121/000045)

accompanies the universities there to successfully fulfil the requirements for AUDIT International and international labels (SIC). It clearly states the purposes and there are no links between the participants and the evaluated institutions.

During the discussion with the Director the panel learnt about ANECA's intention of merging the procedures of AUDIT and AUDIT International into a single model, for streamlining processes; at the time of the site visit that work was in progress but no deadline had been advanced for its completion.

Stakeholders are well involved in both governance bodies and working committees in charge of different activities of ANECA. The Governing Council includes representatives of the Conference of the Social Bodies of Spanish Public Universities, trade unions, the National Confederation of Business Organisations, the Regional Administration with responsibilities in university education, as well as students. During the interview with the Council members, it was emphasised the important role of students in the governance body of a national organisation such ANECA as well as the need for the students to better understand their role and to take part even more actively in the agency's activities. The advisory and evaluation bodies consist majorly of academics but also include student representatives and professional practitioners. The discussions the panel held with all stakeholders confirmed their involvement in the agency's activities and that they were consulted when developing documents and instruments for EQA activities. Still, some experts have expressed a wish to be asked by the agency more often about feedback, after conducting EQA procedures.

### **Analysis**

The information provided in the SAR and gathered during the site visit convinced the review panel that ANECA is a robust organisation, agile and very flexible, 'a connecting point' of the regional accreditation system in Spain, as it defines itself. The agency is engaged in regular EQA activities in accordance with its legal acts. Programme and institutional evaluation of HEIs, in different forms of external quality assurance, are the main activities of ANECA. The panel notes that this is also reflected in the mission and goals of the agency, published on the ANECA's website.

The agency's commitment for the development of the EHEA (as a reliable partner in projects with ENQA, ECA, QA Network, BFUG, for example) has always been significant and highly appreciated by stakeholders. At the same time, internationalisation, as a strategic priority, is materialised in regular EQA activities conducted mainly in the Latin American region. The panel commends the agency for taking the leading role for capacity building of HEIs from abroad, conducting external evaluation at fixed public fees, with non-profit vision. Moreover, the panel got a clear understanding that there is a well-balanced distinction between training activities, which content is far from consultancy and the EQA activities (SIC and AUDIT International). None of ANECA's activities are to be considered as consultancy to the evaluated institutions.

ANECA's mission, vision and values are published on its website. A broad consensus exists among all stakeholders about this mission and the fact that the mission is consistently guiding ANECA in its work. The mission is translated into clear objectives defined in the four-year period strategic plan. Since the strategy might be reviewed every three years, when the director changes, in the panel's views the consistency on the outcomes of the previous strategic plan needs to be maintained. For now, all the discussions the panel had with the Director and the representatives of the management team led to that conclusion.

Overall, the stakeholder involvement is guaranteed, both at governance level and in the work of the agency. The participation of students is guaranteed in institutional and programme evaluation committees. Students are also fully involved in the governance of the agency. They participate as full members in the Governing Council and in this way, they are key actors in ANECA's role in quality

assurance in higher education. While the panel talked with students who were participating in the structures and panels of ANECA, it noticed that their involvement in the governing body could be even more present and active. At the same time, considering the international vocation and ambition of the agency, the panel thinks that the international perspective could be better incorporated into some of the governing bodies of the agency.

### **Panel commendations**

1. The panel commends the agency for taking the leading role in international operations on the large scale, especially in Latin America, thus contributing to the strengthening of quality assurance in higher education in the region.

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

1. The panel suggests the agency to create more systematic and formalised feedback with its expert evaluators.
2. The panel suggests the agency to pursue empowering the place of students even more, thanks to the very good level reached so far.
3. The panel suggests the agency to better embed the international perspective into some of the governing bodies, particularly for the international vocation and ambition of the agency itself.

### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

## **ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The ESG standards of part 2 are covered in this review as follows:

ESG 2.1 is covered for all activities; as per the general procedure of targeted reviews.

ESG 2.6 is covered for all activities as ANECA was found partially compliant in terms of ESG 2.6 in the previous review.

ESG standards 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.7 are covered for the new activities, namely the Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International, introduced since the previous review.

### **ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part I of the ESG.

### **2017 review recommendation: none**

### **Evidence**

All the external quality assurance activities of ANECA are described in the supporting documents associated with each procedure, which are accessible on the website. The panel notes the methodology for Institutional Accreditation covers only the first phase of the process, i.e., initial Institutional Accreditation which is a desktop activity based on the AUDIT and ACREDITA procedures. The methodology for renewal of Institutional Accreditation is under development, as it was learned during the interviews with the agency and the representatives of the ministries.



The SAR provides clear information on the alignment of the agency's assessment schemes with the ESG Part I, as synthetically presented in the table below. According to the table, the agency has considered all the ESG part I in the criteria of its procedures.

Table 3. Compliance of the ANECA's EQA procedures with the ESG part I

Type/ ESG	I.1	I.2	I.3	I.4	I.5	I.6	I.7	I.8	I.9	I.10	
<b>PROGRAMME EVALUATION</b>	<b>VERIFICA Bachelor's and Masters</b>	CR 9	CR 2, 5, 8	CR 5, 8	CR 4	CR 6	CR 7	CR 8, 9	CR 4	CR 8, 9	(*1), (*2)
	<b>VERIFICA Doctorate</b>	CR 8	CR 1, 4, 5, 8	CR 4, 5, 8	CR 3	CR 6	CR 7	CR 8	CR 3	CR 8	(*1), (*2)
	<b>MONITOR Bachelor's and Masters</b>	CR 3	CR 2, 5	CR 1, 6	GLI.1, 1.2	CR 4	CR 5	CR 3, 6	CR 2	GLI.1, CR 3	(*3)
	<b>MONITOR Doctorate</b>	CR 3	CR 2, 5	CR 1, 6	GLI.1, 1.3	CR 4	CR 5	CR 3	CR 2	CR 3	(*3)
	<b>ACREDITA Bachelor's and Masters</b>	CR 3	CR 2	CR 1, 6	GLI.4, 1.5	CR 4	CR 5	CR 3, 7	CR 2	CR 1, 3	(*4)
	<b>ACREDITA Doctorate</b>	CR 3	CR 2	CR 1, 6	GLI.1, 1.3	CR 4	CR 5	CR 3, 7	CR 2	CR 3	(*4)
	<b>SIC: EUR-ACE Eurobachelor EURO-INF Euromaster</b>	CR 3	CR 2	CR 1, 6	CR 1	CR 4	CR 5, 9	CR 3, 7	CR 2	CR 1, 3	(*4)
<b>INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION</b>	<b>DOCENTIA</b>	AX 1	AX 2	AX 2	N/A	AX 1, 2, 3	AX 2	AX 2, 3	AX 1, 3	AX 2, 3	Certif. renewal every 5 years
	<b>Institutional Accreditation (initial/ AUDIT)</b>	CR 1	CR 2	CR 3	CR 3	CR 4	CR 5	CR 6	CR 7	CR 2	CR 8
	<b>Institutional Accreditation (initial/ ACREDITA)</b>	CR 3	CR 2	CR 1, 6	GL 1.4, 1.5	CR 4	CR 5	CR 3, 7	CR 2	CR 1, 3	(*4)
	<b>AUDIT International</b>	CR 1	CR 2	CR 3	CR 3	CR 4	CR 5	CR 9	CR 10	CR 2	Certif. renewal every 5 years

CR – Criterion; GL – Guideline; AX - Axis

(\*1) VERIFICA. The ex-ante ACCREDITATION process is the first stage in a normative framework that requires official university degrees to submit cyclically to an external evaluation process. The legislation of reference in this case is Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates.

(\*2) VERIFICA procedure evaluates, through several criteria, aspects of the design of degrees relating to the definition of educational planning, the intended learning outcomes and the various rules for student progress and retention. In the ACREDITA procedure the outcomes of this design are eventually reviewed according to Criterion 1 and 6.

(\*3) MONITOR. The follow-up process for an official degree implies that official university degrees should undergo a cyclical external evaluation process. This aspect is stated in the legal regulation currently in force in Spain, which includes Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates.

(\*4) ACREDITA. The accreditation renewal process implies that official university degrees must undergo a cyclical external assessment process. This aspect is stated in the legal regulation currently in force in Spain, which includes Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates.

## Analysis

The review panel explored the compliance of all ANECA's EQA activities with ESG part I, with particular focus on the new activities introduced since the previous full review: Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International. Institutional Accreditation is based on the formerly established AUDIT and ACREDITA procedures, taking over their evaluation criteria. AUDIT

International procedure is based on the national AUDIT methodology, applying the latter's criteria and adapting them to the specificity of the countries in which the procedure is conducted.

The panel believes that the references provided by the agency are largely supported by the evidence found in the specific documentation, as demonstrated below.

#### 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

In both programme evaluation procedures (compulsory – ex-ante accreditation, follow-up, and ex-post accreditation or voluntary – evaluation for international labels) and voluntary institutional evaluation procedures (DOCENTIA, AUDIT, AUDIT International and Institutional Accreditation), it is required the HEIs to have implemented quality assurance policies and objectives and to demonstrate functional internal quality assurance systems.

Following stakeholders' feedback, the panel believes that the procedures focus on the presence of processes for internal quality assurance.

#### 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

As the agency itself recognizes in the 2017 SAR, this criterion addresses a key feature of HEIs and is therefore painstakingly revised in all compulsory programme evaluation procedures, throughout all their stages (ex-ante accreditation, follow-up and ex-post accreditation); in ACREDITA, for example, the organisation and development of the programme, with focus on learning outcomes, is considered. In AUDIT the focus is on how the institution provides and ensures quality for its educational programmes, which is also the case for AUDIT International – there institutions are required to describe the design and approval process of their educational offer.

The agency has paid attention to covering the aspects related to the Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (MECES) in line with the ESG standard 1.2. The standard 1.2 covers the aspects of MECES in a general way, ensuring consistent competencies within the Spanish education system.

#### 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment

This standard focuses on how students are encouraged to take an active role in their learning process. The panel noted in the documents that the concept of student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment was integrated: in the ex-ante evaluation for Bachelor's Degrees and Master's Degrees – in the teaching activity planning criteria and expected outcomes; in the ex-ante evaluation for Doctoral Degrees – in the educational activities, programme organisation and the revision and enhancement of the outcomes; in the follow-up evaluation and ex-post accreditation procedures – through criteria such as organisation and delivery and performance indicators, or learning outcomes, respectively. In the AUDIT and AUDIT International this aspect is reviewed in the guideline concerning the way the institution provides student-focused educational programmes. In the case of DOCENTIA, this is considered in the evaluation of planning and that of the teaching activity and its outcomes. The guide ANECA elaborated to assist institutions in drafting, launching, and evaluating learning outcomes is also used for the new procedures of Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International.

#### 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification

This criterion is evaluated in all educational programmes. In the case of Bachelor's and Master's Degrees, in the ex-ante evaluation of the student admission criteria, and for Doctoral Degrees, in students' access and admission; overall, as per the entrance profile guidelines and the admission criteria and academic regulations affecting each degree, through ex post evaluation given upon Criterion 1 in the guidelines for entrance profile and academic regulations. Regarding AUDIT and AUDIT International, this item is reviewed by Criterion 3 (*How the centre orients its educational programmes to the*

students/ *Teaching and other student-oriented actions*). The item is checked in the initial Institutional Accreditation (given its presence under ACREDITA and AUDIT); as for DOCENTIA, it falls out of the scope of the procedure.

#### 1.5 Teaching staff

In the context of evaluation of teaching staff, the accreditation procedures ensure that the expert panel checks compliance with the associated ANECA requirements, which include stipulations on sufficient teaching and support staff with appropriate qualification, policies for staff periodic evaluation, professional development, and promotion. In the case of programme evaluation procedures, during ex-ante accreditation, follow-up and ex-post accreditation, quality assurance for the teaching staff is reviewed under the academic staff or the human resources criterion. In AUDIT and AUDIT International, this is examined under the guideline concerning the way the institution guarantees and enhances the quality of its academic staff. The item is checked in the initial Institutional Accreditation (given its presence under ACREDITA and AUDIT); regarding DOCENTIA, quality assurance of the teaching activity is the object of the procedure.

#### 1.6 Learning resources and student support

The agency assesses learning resources and student support in the section on material resources and services, during ex-ante evaluation, follow-up and ex-post accreditation. In the AUDIT and AUDIT International procedures, this item is assessed by Criterion 5 (*How the university/centre manages and improves its resources and services/ Management and enhancement of Material Resources and Services*). The item is checked in the initial Institutional Accreditation (given its presence under ACREDITA and AUDIT); in the DOCENTIA procedure, it is present under the methodological dimension.

#### 1.7 Information management

As provided in the ANECA's documents, in all programme evaluation procedures (ex-ante, follow-up and ex-post accreditation), this standard is reviewed within the Internal Quality Assurance System and the indicators for level of satisfaction and performance, envisaged outcomes, revision and enhancement and degree outcomes. In the AUDIT procedure it is assessed under Criterion 6 (*How the centre analyses and takes into account feedback from system processes*) and in the AUDIT International procedure, under Criterion 9 (*Analysis and use of results*). The item is checked in the initial Institutional Accreditation (given its presence under ACREDITA and AUDIT); in the DOCENTIA procedure information on the quality of education is considered, as well.

#### 1.8 Public information

All EQA procedures conducted by ANECA ensure that institutions publish information required on their activities and programmes. For programme evaluations, the ex-ante procedure evaluates the student entrance criteria, while the follow-up and ex-post accreditation evaluate Criterion 2 (*Information and Transparency*). In the AUDIT procedure it is assessed under Criterion 7 (*How the university publishes information on degrees and other activities*) and in the AUDIT International procedure, under Criterion 10 (*Public information and transparency*). The item is checked in the initial Institutional Accreditation (given its presence under ACREDITA and AUDIT); in the DOCENTIA procedure the standard is reviewed under the strategic and methodological dimensions.

#### 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Both programme and institutional evaluation procedures address the evaluation of this standard. In ex-ante accreditation, this is addressed through the programme outcomes set and the quality assurance system - for Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and the revision, enhancement and outcomes -

for Doctoral programmes. During the follow-up stage, it is addressed in the entrance profile guideline and the admission criteria, and in the Internal Quality Assurance System criterion. During ex-post accreditation, this is assessed in the criteria for organisation and development and Internal Quality Assurance System. In the AUDIT and AUDIT International procedures, this item is assessed by Criterion 2 (*How the centre guarantees the quality of its educational programmes / Design of the educational proposal*). The item is checked in the initial Institutional Accreditation (given its presence under ACREDITA and AUDIT); in the DOCENTIA procedure the standard is reviewed under the methodological dimension.

#### 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Spanish legislation requires official university degrees to be subjected to an external evaluation process on a cyclical basis, as set forth in Royal Decree 1393/2007 and subsequent updates; in this respect, ANECA's compulsory programme evaluation procedures (ex-ante – VERIFICA, follow-up – MONITOR, and ex-post ACREDITA and SIC) are applied cyclically. In the AUDIT, AUDIT International and DOCENTIA procedures, certification requires a renewal every 5 years. Regarding Institutional Accreditation, it has been initially designed as a one-time process for the HEIs having passed the AUDIT certification and 50% of their programmes having been accredited. Recent changes in legislation have introduced the renewal of Institutional Accreditation, but the methodology of this new stage is under development.

The panel consulted external review reports published on the website and was able to observe that ESG part I was included as described.

#### **Summary**

It is the analytical view of this panel that the agency's evaluations, audits, and accreditations are aligned with ESG 2.1, and from the expert reports findings it can be drawn conclusions that the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes within institutions is rigorously considered and evaluated in a meaningful manner.

The evaluation criteria of all procedures effectively translate the standards of ESG Part I; based on its meetings with stakeholders, it is clear to the panel that the agency's work has contributed to the development of internal quality assurance in the universities from Spain and abroad.

#### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

### ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

#### **2017 review recommendation: none**

#### **Evidence**

The design and review of procedures is a well-defined process, which includes all the EQA activities from ANECA's portfolio. As presented in the SAR (Fig. 3, page 21), any new procedure is initially drafted by a team consisting of technical staff from the agency, students, national and international

academic professional experts. In the design process the legislation in force is considered, together with the ESG and other European references. There is always a pilot phase the procedure is always passing through, for checking their suitability and gathering feedback for its improvement. Once the procedure is finalised and approved by the agency's management, it is published on the website, together with all the related information. At the same time, ANECA uses a wide range of channels (forums, meetings, conferences, social networks) to disseminate the information on procedures and their implementation. Regular analysis is performed in the form of meta-evaluation activities, aiming to periodically review the procedures and their associated documents (criteria, guides, handbooks, etc.) either for alignment with the legislation or to address the stakeholders' needs. During the interviews with different stakeholders the panel was able to see they all appreciated the collaboration with ANECA and the way the agency collected their feedback and included it in the EQA procedures. In particular, the Ministry of Universities is fully satisfied on how the external evaluation procedures are designed and implemented by the agency, and how the consultation with stakeholders is carried on in the design phase.

As it has been already mentioned, since the previous ENQA full review two new activities have been developed: Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International. Institutional Accreditation consists of two phases: initial Institutional Accreditation and renewal of Institutional Accreditation. The first phase has been designed considering both the legislative provisions and the taking over of the bureaucratic workload from the HEIs: the methodology applies to eligible institutions ('centres', according to the Spanish legislation, i.e., universities, faculties, doctoral schools, etc.) which 1) have accredited at least half of the Bachelor, Master's and doctoral degree programmes and 2) are certified for their internal quality assurance system. Therefore, initial Institutional Accreditation can be achieved by passing through ANECA's ACREDITA procedure of at least 50% of the study programmes offered at each cycle, and by being certified within ANECA's AUDIT procedure (or AUDIT International, in the case of HEIs out of Spain). In this way efficient and effective EQA activities are guaranteed, releasing institutions from the burden of additional costs and bureaucracy.

As far as the design of the second phase is concerned, the panel learned about ANECA's collaboration with other Spanish QA agencies within REACU (the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies) for applying Institutional Accreditation procedure in a common way. This collaboration also extends to the current activity of designing the methodology for renewal of Institutional Accreditation. In this process, the agency is involved, as well, in a wide consultation of stakeholders. During the interviews it was mentioned that during the month of June 2022 an event was to be organised in that respect, with large participation of HEIs.

The design and implementation of AUDIT International procedure follows the same stages described above (i.e., design, piloting, dissemination, review, and improvement). It was initially designed in 2011 as a response to the request of the Peruvian National Assembly of Rectors and extended, over the years, to other regions from Latin America. The methodology is similar to the one used for the national AUDIT; this may be supplemented with additional aspects addressing the social responsibility mission of most HEIs in Latin America. At the same time, it focuses on research, which has been introduced on HEIs' request, as well. From the interviews with the university representatives the panel could understand that the focus on research was seen as an added value by the national university centres too, as they felt the need to value their research activities with an international panel of auditors. The agency makes efforts to involve students (including international ones) to improve the AUDIT International procedure and to achieve its goals, considering the national regulations of each country. However, from interviews the panel could notice that students were minimally involved in the design and improvement of the procedure, so far.

## **Analysis**

By reading the SAR and related documents and conducting discussions with the agency and different stakeholders, the panel is convinced that ANECA performs clearly defined external quality assurance procedures, implemented in line with the Spanish legislation, and considering other European references. All the agency's activities are fitted to HEIs' demands, the spectrum of methodologies is broad, and stakeholders are involved alongside the whole cycle of their development and implementation. The stakeholders confirm the fitness for purpose of the EQA activities and appreciate the efforts the agency puts in making synergies among procedures to release the institutions from additional costs and bureaucratic burden.

Methodologies are already designed to foresee the application of the European approach for the external QA of joint degrees. In the panel's views, this is a very good anticipation done by ANECA, as the European approach has been formally adopted in the Royal decree and could be applied immediately.

At the same time, the panel sees the AUDIT International procedure is a proof of the agency's agility and responsiveness to the stakeholders' needs, from at least two points of view: 1) it has been developed at their request and designed in close cooperation with the institutions and governments of the respective countries; 2) the focus on research has been introduced on request of HEIs from Latin American region. However, considering that the special emphasis put on research in the AUDIT International procedure is very much appreciated also by national university centres, the panel believes it is important for the agency to keep this when merging the national and international audit procedures.

ANECA provides adequate documentation to ensure the proper implementation of procedures, which is easily accessible on the website. It was clear to the panel from the interviews it held with various stakeholders that, once the procedures are implemented, the agency continues to gather feedback in a systematic way for their further improvement. This approach surely has contributed to building good and trustful relationships with the HEIs and national authorities. While the panel was impressed by the agency's commitment to transparency and openness to stakeholders' feedback, it believed that stakeholders' involvement in its activities and processes could be enhanced, especially by considering even more the students' opinions and proposals for improvement in the case of AUDIT International.

## **Panel commendations**

2. The panel commends the agency for the trust built all over Spanish HE due to stakeholders' involvement and transparency in the design of EQA procedures, and for the way it cooperates with the Ministry, with full commitment in ESG compliance in view of an effective EHEA.

## **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

4. The panel suggests the agency to consider even more the students' opinions and proposals when designing and improving its EQA procedures, especially in the case of AUDIT International.

## **Panel conclusion: compliant**

## ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

**2017 review recommendation:** none

**2021 EQAR Register Committee's conclusion on Substantive Change Report:** "The Register Committee expects that the forthcoming review of ANECA analyses whether the full documentation of the AUDIT INTERNACIONAL programme is published as required by the standards."

### Evidence

The review panel read, besides the SAR, the documentation related to the 2017 ENQA full review, which included clear evidence on the full compliance with ESG 2.3 of all EQA activities implemented by that time.

Institutional Accreditation, as a new activity of the agency, has been implemented at the moment of the site visit only in its initial stage. Although the initial Institutional Accreditation procedure does not involve a site visit explicitly, this is incorporated into the national AUDIT and ACREDITA (programme accreditation), which are both mandatory procedures for an institution/ centre to be eligible for Institutional Accreditation. The procedure for renewal of Institutional Accreditation is still under development; therefore, the panel was not able to observe it. As has been already mentioned under the ESG 2.2, all stakeholders appreciated the shift towards Institutional Accreditation as a chance to disburden HEIs from bureaucracy and to lower their costs with external evaluation.

AUDIT International, the second new activity implemented by the agency since the last review, is conducted following the same stages as the national AUDIT. It involves a site-visit, and a renewal of the certification is needed every 5 years, which means that the certification itself is a follow-up of the effective implementation of the design of the IQA system, previously approved. The panel followed the 2021 EQAR Register Committee's conclusion on Substantive Change Report and learned that the entire documentation related to the AUDIT International is transparent and published on ANECA's website. The same applies to the Institutional Accreditation.

The SAR presents in synthesis (Table 10, page 22) the steps followed by each of the new procedures regarding the self-evaluation or equivalent, external evaluation, reporting and systematic follow-up.

Writing the findings in the external review report lies entirely with the expert panel members and the draft report is sent to the institution, which is able to comment on the findings. All reports are published on the agency's website.

### Analysis

The Institutional Accreditation approach adopted by the Spanish legislation and the associated procedure conducted by ANECA is very much appreciated by the HEIs, being considered a real step forward in consolidating quality culture in HEIs and a means to lower their burden in terms of costs and bureaucracy, still effectively including the 4-step procedure required by ESG 2.3. The panel notes

that the initial Institutional Accreditation process has positively impacted the higher education system in Spain, but the cyclical process of reviews (in the form of renewal of Institutional Accreditation) is not entirely implemented. However, there is enough evidence that the process is under development, as the legal framework has been adopted recently, with all stakeholders working on developing its methodology in compliance with the ESG.

Regarding AUDIT International, it is implemented following the methodology of national AUDIT; representatives of the reviewed institutions speak highly about the quality of the process.

Both procedures are transparent and supported by clear and well written documents, available on ANECA's website. The panel confirms that both procedures include all steps required by the ESG, i.e., a self-assessment, a site visit, an external review report and a follow-up, considering the explanations from the 'Evidence' section.

### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

## ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

**2017 review recommendation:** "The panel would encourage the agency to continue and extend its efforts to include international experts in review panels."

**2021 EQAR Register Committee's conclusion on Substantive Change Report:** "The Register Committee expects that the forthcoming review of ANECA thoroughly discusses the involvement of students in all AUDIT INTERNATIONAL reviews."

### **Evidence**

The activity performed by experts within EQA procedures conducted by ANECA is seen by the agency as 'essential' and their selection of 'vital importance' for ensuring the quality of the processes (SAR, page 22). The expert selection is based on the document entitled *Call for experts of evaluation, certification, and accreditation processes*, which clearly describes the requirements for each profile of each procedure and includes aspects related to incompatibilities. Open calls for national and international experts are published by ANECA on both Spanish and English websites, in a transparent way. Since its foundation, the agency has acquired an extensive database of qualified experts, as the panel could learn from the interviews with different stakeholders.

For granting initial Institutional Accreditation there is no need for experts, as the procedure consists in verification of requirements (the evaluated centre having passed the evaluation that certifies the implementation of its quality assurance system - AUDIT procedure, and having passed the evaluation of at least 50% of accreditation renewals for degrees offered by that centre (ACREDITA procedure); this verification is done by the Advisory Committee for Institutional Accreditation (director of the Agency and persons responsible for the procedures involved). Of course, the AUDIT and the ACREDITA procedures do involve experts (including students).

According to the SAR, the experts involved in the AUDIT International procedure are selected through a permanently open call and the panels include a student 'whenever possible'. On-site visit interviews show this is not yet a systematic practice. The review panel understood that ensuring



participation of students in this procedure is not always easy to achieve due to their limited availability. On the other hand, when students are present, they are considered as equal members, able to share their views and to contribute to the external evaluation report.

The HEI is informed about the composition of the expert panel and is able to amend it in case of conflict of interest or any other good reason. ANECA has adopted a Code of Ethics, which sets the rules for conducting its procedures, including reference to incompatibilities. All agency members, staff and collaborators, shall abide by the provisions of this document.

All expert panel members are trained before being engaged with ANECA procedures, including AUDIT International. The experts the panel spoke to confirmed that the information acquired during training were useful and efficient; in addition, the expert panel has informal preparation, consisting in several meetings before the site visit and discussions among panel members. The students are encouraged to take part as observers in a procedure before participating in full capacity of panel members. This intermediate step, systematically applied, might strengthen their practical skills before having the first review.

### **Analysis**

The new EQA procedures under this targeted review, in particular AUDIT International but also Institutional Accreditation (indirectly, through AUDIT and ACREDITA procedures) are conducted by groups of external experts which include academics, students, and representatives of the professional field. In the panel's views, involving more international experts in national procedures and ensuring a larger coverage of internationality in AUDIT International procedure could contribute to achieve one of the agency's strategic priorities, i.e., strengthen the internationalisation of the Spanish HEIs together with the internationalisation of ANECA.

While the panel acknowledges the system is built to have students in each single expert panel, in each of the ANECA procedures, efforts might still even better guarantee that this is always the case in AUDIT International. From the interviews with the students, it was clear that they were involved in AUDIT International – as equal members of the review panels. However, the majority of procedures of AUDIT International did not include students in the panels of evaluators and the agency explained that it was because they could not always find students available for those evaluation missions. Whereas there is proof that the process foresees students, the implementation of these processes has great room for improvement, as to make more efforts to guarantee the involvement of students in the evaluation panels in all AUDIT International procedures. More systematic involvement of students is needed like in all other ANECA activities, particularly now that the agency wants to grow internationally, and considering the upcoming merging of the two procedures – national and international AUDIT. It is important to maintain over time the solidity and robustness built nationally at the same high level of quality offered nationally and internationally.

ANECA makes good use of its extended expert database in selecting high quality experts and conducting efficient training sessions. The experts interviewed were positive about the training and guidance they received. The smooth communication with the agency all along the evaluation process was highly appreciated. The panel sees the observation phase before becoming a full panel member as a good practice and appreciates that the students are recognized and valued within the expert panel. On the other hand, a wider sharing of experience wished by the interviewed experts might be considered by ANECA as an opportunity for improvement of their activity on external evaluation.

Appropriate mechanisms to ensure adequate implementation of procedures and avoid conflict of interest, both by the agency and the assessed institutions, are in place; the panel is convinced about their application and efficiency.

### **Panel commendations**

3. The panel commends the agency for having developed an extensive and high-quality expert database.

#### **Panel recommendations**

1. The panel recommends the agency to involve students more systematically in AUDIT International procedure, like in all other ANECA activities, particularly now that the agency wants to grow internationally, and considering the upcoming merging of the two procedures – national and international AUDIT.

#### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

5. The panel suggests the agency to create opportunities for experts to share their experiences in dedicated events.

#### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

### ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

#### **2017 review recommendation: none**

**2021 EQAR Register Committee's conclusion on Substantive Change Report:** "The Register Committee expects that the forthcoming review of ANECA analyses whether the full documentation of the AUDIT INTERNACIONAL programme is published as required by the standards."

#### **Evidence**

ANECA's Institutional Accreditation procedure is offered as an alternative to the degree accreditation system. For initial Institutional Accreditation, the outcome is a binding positive or negative evaluation report, which takes into account 50% of the study programmes offered by a center, based on which the Universities Council makes the final decision. If the Universities Council issues a positive resolution, the accredited centre will be registered in the Register of Universities, Centres and Degrees (RUCT); based on this registration, all bachelor's and Master's degrees offered by the accredited center are considered accredited and there is no need to subject them all individually to renewal of accreditation. The renewal of Institutional Accreditation is required after 6 years from the date of obtaining the last accreditation resolution.

By the AUDIT International procedure, ANECA certifies the Internal Quality Assurance Systems (ICAS) designed and implemented by HEIs from abroad, applying the same standards used in the national AUDIT procedure. The certification is valid for five years, after which renewal is required.

The two new EQA procedures of ANECA are based on explicit criteria, as is the case for all other procedures conducted by ANECA. Full documentation is published on the agency's website: 1) for Institutional Accreditation procedure it includes information on scope of action, regulations, documents, and tools (guidelines and assessment criteria), advisory committee for institutional accreditations, and the assessment reports and accredited centres, <https://www.aneca.es/en/centres-and-institutions>; 2) for AUDIT International procedure it includes information on scope of action,

participation requirements, registers of certified universities/ centres, evaluation reports, evaluation and certification commissions, and evaluation model (guidelines and evaluation criteria), <https://www.aneca.es/en/internal-quality-assurance-systems-for-institutions>.

To ensure that the procedures are applied in a coherent way and the criteria are consistently interpreted and evidence based, ANECA uses a two-level mechanism: in AUDIT International, all documents related to the evaluation conducted (including self-evaluation report and external review report) are examined by the Assessment Committee, which is in charge with the final decision. Regarding initial Institutional Accreditation, the panel read in the SAR that the Advisory Committee for Institutional Accreditation met periodically to standardise the assessment criteria. This was also confirmed by the minutes of the meetings, which ANECA made available to the panel.

### **Analysis**

The panel notes that the consistency of application of criteria could only be verified with initial Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International procedures, the development of the procedure for renewal of Institutional Accreditation being work in progress.

All the documents consulted and the discussions during the on-site visit convinced the review panel that the criteria of the two new procedures (i.e., initial Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International) are applied consistently. The views expressed in the various meetings indicated a positive approach to the consistency and fairness of the evaluations. Overall, ANECA is regarded as being very professional and rigorous in its judgments.

The panel highly appreciates the use of two-levels commissions as a very appropriate mechanism to assure consistency in decisions. Although it might be resource-consuming, it is very important to maintain accountability and build the high reputation and recognition of the agency among all partners, and the independence of the processes.

### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

## ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

**2017 review recommendation:** “The panel recommends that the agency consider how best to include all the valuable information contained in the ‘long’ reports in the published reports.”

**2017 EQAR Register Committee’s conclusion:** “[...] The Register Committee concluded that ANECA’s practice of publishing summary reports does not meet the requirement of the standard, and therefore could not follow the panel’s conclusion of compliance [...]”

### **Evidence**

The external evaluation reports are prepared by ANECA’s Committees (Assessment Committees – for VERIFICA and MONITOR, DOCENTIA, AUDIT and AUDIT International, and Accreditation Committees – for ACREDITA and SIC), following a multiple stage process which is described in the accompanying documentation of each of the agency’s EQA procedures. The self-evaluation report

sent by the institution is analysed by the expert panel and the findings are uploaded on an electronic platform by each of the panel members after the site visit; ANECA staff reviews the information presented by the experts to ensure its completeness and consistency. Based on experts' evidence-based findings, the respective committee drafts the first version of the report, which is sent to the institution for comments and/or allegations; the second version is drafted considering the institution's feedback and is then calibrated for consistency, quality checked and approved by the Assessment/ Accreditation Committee. In the case of VERIFICA procedure, the final check and approval is done by the Report-issuing Committee.

All reports and decisions on evaluations are published on the agency's website. In addition, ANECA requires the HEIs to publish the final reports on accreditation on their websites, as well. The review panel looked at different external evaluation reports and was able to note the agency's efforts for addressing the recommendation from the ENQA previous full review. Reports resulting from programme evaluation procedures are published in a more extensive format than they were five years ago, while, in the case of SIC procedures, full expert reports are published. Regarding AUDIT and AUDIT International procedures, there were not published full reports of the auditors from the first phase activities of design certification, but the panel was able to see the situation improving during the past years and full reports of the second phase of audits, i.e., certification of implementation of the ISQA, being published for all the certified centres. The external evaluation report presents the overall assessment of the ISQA, justification, opportunities for improvement and strengths.

The report of the initial Institutional Accreditation procedure includes: 'validity of the certificate of implementation of the ISQA, status in the Registry of Universities, Schools and Degrees (RUCT) for the undergraduate and master's degrees and motivation: the evaluation of the criteria and observations is detailed, highlighting the points that will be evaluated in the institutional accreditation renewal process' (SAR, page 25).

ANECA has prepared new internal documents to provide guidance in drafting external evaluation reports, considering the need for extensive justification on judgements and their adequate presentation, for an easy understanding by all stakeholders. In doing so, the agency conducted a consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders (students, academics, experts, HEIs) on the form and content of the external evaluation reports. The experts involved in EQA activities receive training and guidelines for drafting the report according to the new provisions.

## **Analysis**

Based on the presented evidence, the panel concludes that the ENQA recommendations to ANECA from the previous review in 2017 were considered and fully addressed. Presently, all reports from programme evaluation are published on the website in a more extensive format and for SIC, AUDIT and AUDIT International the full expert reports are published.

The steps to come up with a final report for programme evaluation procedures are described under evidence. It is a more elaborated procedure than simply "experts write a report which is fully published". The elaborated procedure was introduced and improved to fulfil with the other ESG requirements of consistency, coherency and with the principle that reports need to be clear and concise in their structure and language. Based on the findings that each expert of a panel uploads in a specific electronic platform after the site-visit, there is a specific Committee working to deliver consistent reports, having heard the feedback from institutions. The reports that are published are fully based on findings of the review experts and on the HEI's feedback. They are not simple summaries, they are extensive reports where the view of the experts is given exhaustively, as verified during interviews on-site and having analysed a sample of reports.

Before the final report is issued, the HEI has an opportunity to make comments and/ or allegations. Depending on procedure, the Assessment/ Accreditation Committee is responsible for processing those comments and then issuing the final report. As indicated under ESG 2.7, appeals procedures are in place after the publication of the final report.

Following the discussions with different interviewees, the panel is convinced that the content of the reports is the result of the independent work of the expert panel members, further analysed and approved by ANECA respective committees.

The panel analysed the reports of the different EQA procedures and concluded they were adequate in terms of clearness and conciseness and thus understandable to interested parties (prospective students and other stakeholders). However, regarding the reports on ACREDITA procedure, more transparency might be useful in providing information on the different steps of drafted reports, including consultations and calibration of final outcomes, considering the feedback received from the institutions.

The new reporting applied for the second phase of the AUDIT International procedure, i.e., certification of implementation of ISQA, is considered by the review panel as good practice, which needs to be extended to the next design certification phase. There are no reasons to believe the agency will not pursue in this direction.

#### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

6. The panel suggests the agency to ensure more transparency in providing information on the different steps of drafted reports in ACREDITA procedure, including consultations and calibration of final outcomes.

#### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

### ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

**2017 review recommendation:** none

**2017 EQAR Register Committee's conclusion:** "The review panel stated that appeals are not available for the Monitor procedure as the activity has a supportive/developmental nature and that no decisions are taken on its basis. The Register Committee nevertheless noted that higher education institution should be provided with the possibility to appeal the results of an external quality assurance procedure, no matter whether these include a formal accreditation decision or merely a published assessment report".

#### **Evidence**

The SAR mentions that since 2016 the complaints, suggestions and commendations sent to the agency are managed by the Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Unit, operating within the Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit. ANECA offers several channels for complaints, suggestions, and commendations, which are presented in detail on the website (see <http://www.aneca.es/eng/ANECA/Social-Responsibility/Internal-Quality/Complaints-and-suggestions>).

E-mail addresses are set for each of the procedures conducted by ANECA, for facilitating communication with the reviewed institutions. All complaints must be answered within 20 days. The agency has mechanisms to monitor the process and it periodically informs the management (directly the Director) on complaints, possible causes and responses to them; this information is also used when proposing improvement actions and is included in the agency's annual report.

According to the strategic priority of enhancing transparency, in 2021 the *ANECA Electronic Office* was established, aiming at ensuring direct connection between the agency and the wide public and, thereby, improving their participation with feedback to the activities conducted by the agency. Another project, entitled '*ANECA Responde*' is under implementation; it aims to channel all requests for information received from users in order to answer them, as well as to use them for improvement of procedures and their accessibility.

The panel was able to read in the SAR about how the agency addressed EQAR Register Committee's comment of the previous review: the MONITOR procedure offers the institution the possibility to comment on factual errors that might appear in the follow-up report. At the same time, the report is part of the documentation requested during the renewal of accreditation, therefore the institution is able to add clarifications in the self-evaluation report for the ACREDITA procedure.

In the case of the two new procedures implemented since the previous ENQA full review, i.e., Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International, the complaints and appeals are managed by following the general scheme (Fig. 4, page 25 of the SAR) and are evaluated by the Advisory Committee for the Evaluation of Programmes and Institutions. The panel notes that no complaints or appeals have been received from institutions for none of the two procedures.

### **Analysis**

The review panel confirms that the agency has developed clear complaints and appeals processes. They are mentioned in the documentation and guidance provided under each procedure published on the agency website. Although no formal complaints have been filed on ESG-related new activities (i.e., Institutional Accreditation and AUDIT International), yet, it is important for a quality assurance agency to offer institutions the opportunity to appeal in case they consider this to be relevant and give clear information on how to proceed. The panel confirms information is clear on how to file an appeal or a complaint.

The Advisory Committee for the Evaluation of Programmes and Institutions, the structure in charge with complaints and appeals in the case of the two new procedures, consists of academics, professionals and includes one student. The panel is convinced about the expertise, the professional integrity and approach of the Committee members, and considers that the composition of the Committee is adequate in order to play its role as an independent appeals body.

During the on-site interviews, the representatives of HEIs, from Spain and abroad, confirmed that they know about the possibility of submitting complaints and appeals to ANECA. The good interaction between the agency and the reviewed institutions seems to some extent prevent the latter from submitting formal complaints. The panel believes the recently implemented tools to enhance transparency, i.e., *ANECA Electronic Office*, *ANECA Responde*, have great potential to reach the final goal of improving both the communication with stakeholders and the procedures themselves.

### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

## ENHANCEMENT AREAS

### ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

ANECA plays an important role in the Spanish higher education system, being considered by the stakeholders a quality assurance structure with national representation very mature and with a positive evolution over the years. It benefits from a strong professional staff and has in place well settled and appropriately implemented procedures. Quality culture permeates at all levels of the agency, its bodies internally and externally, its partners and its stakeholders.

The review panel was provided with an additional document, annexed to SAR, explaining the agency's interest in enhancing its internal quality assurance and professional conduct, as they are defined by ESG 3.6. The document has been developed in direct connection with the ANECA's current strategic plan and followed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the respective standard, as they could be identified from the self-assessment process. It reflects very good projections for the coming years, as the agency has ambitious goals fully supported by the governance and assumed by staff at all levels, HEIs and partners.

The structure of the agency includes the Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit with a specific task to monitor in a systematic way the achievement of the strategic goals, with clear indicators set in the operational plans.

There is a strong and constant focus on assessing the performance of activities conducted by ANECA and the quality of its staff and experts. Internal and external feedback mechanisms are available to systematically collect relevant information from stakeholders and incorporate it in the reviewed versions of procedures, or its use for continuous improvement. In this respect, the meta-evaluation activities, consisting of regular revision and update of criteria and processes based on stakeholders' feedback, are powerful internal quality assurance means leading to improvement.

One of the major transformations is related to the adaptation of the agency to information technology. It is intended that moving towards digitalisation of EQA procedures to also facilitate their streamlining and, thus, reducing bureaucracy which is still seen as an important challenge. This is an area the agency might consider for enhancement also because the current electronic platform for national and international audit was described as obsolete by users. However, this need has been already addressed and acknowledged by the ministry and ANECA to improve and uniform with other platforms; the mechanisms being in place, there are good reasons to believe the agency is able to cope with this issue.

All staff members seem engaged in and committed to the agency, showing a positive opinion on how the activities are implemented. They are well prepared and experienced, benefiting from training opportunities regularly offered by ANECA for their professional development. Still, there are growing activities (e.g., related to internationalisation) which rely on one person; the agency might think of developing risk management tools even further, to avoid such situations.

Expert panel members are selected from a database, based on their expertise, and trained in direct connection to their assignment. They are treated equally while implementing procedures, the same rights and obligations being ensured. While the agency has well established mechanisms to ensure the quality of the external evaluation reports and the independence of experts involved in EQA procedures, creating the framework for a more systematic and formalised feedback with expert evaluators might help ANECA to make better use of their input.

The pandemic of COVID-19 has generated several changes in working behaviour and one of the challenges identified by the agency is about the need for implementation of the required procedures of consolidation of teleworking with full guarantees on quality. The agency might also think how to

ensure a balanced work online and in person, benefitting from the experience gained during the pandemic and, at the same time, not neglecting the importance of the face-to face mode (when referring either to the current work in the agency or to the EQA activities conducted by the evaluation teams).

Inclusion and equality have been specifically introduced in the new Code of Ethics, as values to ensure consideration of circumstances related to specific needs concerning diversity. At the same time, academic integrity is highly promoted by ANECA's management as a major factor in providing confidence in the quality of education.

ANECA ensures appropriate communication channels and close cooperation with its stakeholders. Recently, this has grown visibly, as the means of the agency have diversified, e.g., ANECA Electronic Office, 'ANECA Responde', internal/ external newsletters, the website including news about its activities or options of sending direct messages, which facilitates the agency to offer guidance and to gather feedback. Its presence in social media is growing as well, and ANECA TV is standing out from other also widely used platforms.

It is remarkable the effort put by the agency in elaborating and publishing a significant number of reports, relevant for different stakeholders and freely accessible on the website. The *Report on the status of external quality assessment in Spanish universities*, for instance, is issued regularly and represents a collection of good practices, providing, at the same time, analyses on EQA activities' impact on Spanish HEIs and facilitating decision-making processes for HE system improvement. This is to be continued regardless of the 3 year-cadence of the precedency. The agency also makes mid-cycle meta-evaluations in the form of feedback surveys, which is a powerful instrument of IQA effectively used by ANECA to adjust some elements and improve quality of its activities. Moreover, annual reports are issued every year, mainly for internal use, but could be an interesting source of information for stakeholders, as well.

During the interviews, the panel learned about the 'auto-diagnostic' tool used to filter programmes applying for an international quality label (under SIC procedure) but not ready to get it, as they do not yet fulfil the criteria. This instrument is very much appreciated: on one hand, programmes can avoid failure when they apply for a quality label, as they decide to apply only when they ascertain they are mature enough; on the other hand, ANECA is able to cope with the high demand of international labels in an efficient way, maximising the success rate in their awarding.

The panel therefore commends ANECA for the activity carried on within the Continuous improvement Unit and the developments foreseen under ESG 3.6. The agency is encouraged to pursue its commitment and efforts for providing quality services, especially regarding the new activities already implemented or to be implemented soon (i.e., new quality labels).

While appreciating the ANECA's achievements in developing a robust internal quality assurance system over the years, the review panel suggests the agency to consider implementing a more formalised approach, which might be easier to follow by stakeholders and lead to more measurable impact. At the same time, it might enhance regularity of external dissemination of results from targeted studies, thus making even more visible the milestones in IQA principles set by the agency despite the triannual cadence of the direction. In panel's views, these measures could be seen as a next step in strengthening IQA and agency's engagement in the field of information exchange and professional conduct.



## **ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS (optional section)**

### **ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

In 2021, EQAR Register Committee's conclusion on the Substantive Change Report was that the forthcoming review addressed how AUDIT INTERNATIONAL results fed into the agency's thematic analyses.

In compliance with its mission and strategy, ANECA provides society with information about the result of its activities and HEIs, with information and guidelines for their decision-making processes in the functional areas of the agency. The SAR includes a detailed overview of reports ANECA publishes on its activities and procedures. The panel has been able to access those reports on the agency's website and acknowledges that the agency has made clear progress in this area in recent years; it has continued to analyse the data and information emerging from evaluations conducted and produced a wider range of thematic reports published on the Spanish quality assurance system together with other studies of interest for universities from Spain and abroad.

Still, the panel could not identify reports based on AUDIT International evaluations. At the same time, although ANECA is to be commended for the relevant studies conducted and useful analyses offered to its stakeholders, it might consider enhancing regularity of external dissemination of targeted studies to allow programmes and institutions to learn more from each other and inform society even better on the quality and the diversity of the higher education system of Spain or of the regions in which ANECA conducts AUDIT International procedures.

# CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	1. The panel commends the agency for taking the leading role in international operations on the large scale, especially in Latin America, thus contributing to the strengthening of quality assurance in higher education in the region.
ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE	2. The panel commends the agency for the trust built all over Spanish HE due to stakeholder's involvement and transparency in the design of EQA procedures, and for the way it cooperates with the Ministry, with full commitment in ESG compliance in view of an effective EHEA.
ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS	3. The panel commends the agency for having developed an extensive and high-quality expert database.

## OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS	1. The panel recommends the agency to involve students more systematically in AUDIT International procedure, like in all other ANECA activities, particularly now that the agency wants to grow internationally, and considering the upcoming merging of the two procedures – national and international AUDIT.
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In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, ANECA is in compliance with the ESG.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The panel suggests the agency to create more systematic and formalised feedback with its expert evaluators.</li><li>2. The panel suggests the agency to pursue empowering the place of students even more, thanks to the very good level reached so far.</li><li>3. The panel suggests the agency to better embed the international perspective into some of the governing bodies, particularly for the international vocation and ambition of the agency itself.</li></ol>
ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE	4. The panel suggests the agency to consider even more the students' opinions and proposals when designing and improving its EQA procedures, especially in the case of AUDIT International.

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ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS	5. The panel suggests the agency to create opportunities for experts to share their experiences in dedicated events.
ESG 2.6 REPORTING	6. The panel suggests the agency to ensure more transparency in providing information on the different steps of drafted reports in ACREDITA procedure, including consultations and calibration of final outcomes.

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# ANNEXES

## ANNEX I: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
13.05.2022 - Online meeting with the agency's resource person			
1 ONLINE	14.00-16.00 (120 min)	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for site visit	Review Panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Laura Beccari</b> International Affairs Officer, Project Manager The Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ), Switzerland Chair, quality assurance professional (ENQA nominee)</li> <li>• <b>Simona Lache</b> Professor and Vice-rector for Internationalisation and Quality Evaluation Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania Secretary, academic (EUA nominee)</li> <li>• <b>Damian Michalik</b> PhD candidate in Physics University of Warsaw, Poland Student (ESU nominee, member of the European Students' Union Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool)</li> </ul>
2 ONLINE	16.00-17.00 (60 min)	An online clarification meeting with the agency's resource person to clarify the agency's changes since the last full review against the ESG and to understand the background and motive of the agency's choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (next to the overall HE and QA context of the agency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• Coordinator for Programme and Institutional Evaluation</li> <li>• Head of Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit</li> </ul>
23.05.2022 – Day 0 (pre-visit)			
3	19.30-21.00	Review panel's pre-visit meeting and preparations for day 1	

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
IN PERSON	(90 min)		
24.05.2022 – Day I			
	8.30-9.00 (30 min)	Review panel's private meeting	
4 MIXED	9.00-10.00 (60 min)	Meeting with the Director and representatives from the Senior Management Team, including the Internationalization Committee President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• Manager</li> <li>• Coordinator for Programme and Institutional Evaluation.</li> <li>• Coordinator of CNEAI Procedure</li> <li>• President of the Internationalisation Committee</li> <li>• Coordinator of the Communication Unit</li> </ul>
	10.00-10.25 (25 min)	Review panel's private discussion	
5 ONLINE	10.25-10.55 (30 min)	Meeting with the Chair and members of the Governing Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director General of Universities, Research and Transfer, Autonomous Community of Cantabria</li> <li>• Secretary General of the Conference of University Social Councils</li> </ul>
	10.55-11.20 (25 min)	Review panel's private discussion	
6 IN PERSON	11.20-11.50 (30 min)	Meeting with self-assessment team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit</li> <li>• Officer of Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit</li> <li>• Officer of Programmes and Institutional Evaluation</li> </ul>
7 IN PERSON	11.50-12.50 (60 min)	Meeting with staff of the agency in charge of evaluations: programme evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Manager of VERIFICA and MONITOR Bachelor and Master</li> <li>• Officer of VERIFICA, MONITOR and ACREDITA Doctorate</li> </ul>

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Manager of ACREDITA Procedure Grade and Master and Project Manager of INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION</li> <li>• Officer of ACREDITA</li> <li>• Officer of ACREDITA</li> </ul>
	12.50-14.10 (80 min)	Lunch (panel only)	
8 IN PERSON	14.10-15.10 (60 min)	Meeting with staff of the agency in charge of evaluations: institutional evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Manager of NATIONAL and INTERNATIONAL AUDIT</li> <li>• Project Manager of DOCENTIA</li> <li>• Project Manager of SIC</li> <li>• Administrative of SIC</li> <li>• Administrative of SIC</li> </ul>
	15.10-15.35 (25 min)	Review panel's private discussion	
9 IN PERSON	15.35-16.35 (60 min)	Meeting with agency staff responsible for: internal quality, communication, equity, and administrative staff for human resources, informatics and economic management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit</li> <li>• Officer of Communication Unit</li> <li>• Head of Equity Unit</li> <li>• Manager</li> <li>• President of the Internationalisation Committee</li> <li>• Officer for Informatics</li> <li>• Officer for Economic Management</li> <li>• Officer for Human Resources</li> </ul>
	16.35-17.00 (25 min)	Review panel's private discussion	
10	17.00-17.30	Meeting with representatives of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Appeals Committee of SIC</li> </ul>

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
ONLINE	(30 min)	Assessment Committee for the Evaluation of Education and Institutions and Appeals Committee of SIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Appeals Committee of SIC</li> <li>• Universidad de Salamanca, Advisory Council for Institutional and Programme Evaluation</li> <li>• Universitat d'Alacant. VERIFICA MONITOR, ACREDITA Doctorate</li> <li>• Universidad de Granada VERIFICA, MONITOR, Bachelor and Master</li> <li>• Universidad de Valladolid. VERIFICA, MONITOR, ACREDITA Doctorate</li> </ul>
11 IN PERSON	17.30-18.30 (60 min)	Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day 2	
	19.30	Dinner (panel only)	
25.05.2022 – Day 2			
	8.30-9.00 (30 min)	Review panel's private meeting	
12 ONLINE	9.00-10.00 (60 min)	Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universidad de Sevilla, DOCENTIA</li> <li>• Universidad de Oviedo, AUDIT</li> <li>• Universidad de Zaragoza, SIC-EURACE</li> <li>• Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, VERIFICA</li> <li>• Universidad de Salamanca, VERIFICA, MONITOR and ACREDITA Doctorate</li> <li>• Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, ACREDITA</li> <li>• RSEQ, SIC</li> <li>• Universidad Nacional San Marcos de Perú, AUDIT INTERNA-</li> </ul>

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
			TIONAL
	10.00-10.20 (20 min)	Review panel's private discussion	
13 ONLINE	10.20-11.50 (90 min)	Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEIs and quality assurance officers of HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Quality and Prospective Unit, Universidad Pontificia de Comillas</li> <li>• Quality Vice-Rector, Universidad de Extremadura</li> <li>• Quality assurance Officer, Universidad de Jaén</li> <li>• Head of the organisation and quality team, Universidad Pública de Navarra.</li> <li>• Vice-Rector for Quality and Academic Organisation, Universidad Católica de Murcia</li> <li>• Vicerrectora de Calidad de la Universidad Autónoma de Chile, AUDIT INTERNATIONAL</li> </ul>
	11.50-12.15 (25 min)	Review panel's private discussion	
14 ONLINE	12.15-13.15 (60 min)	Meeting with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universidad Camilo José Cela, DOCENTIA</li> <li>• Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, AUDIT</li> <li>• Commission of the Doctorate Programme in Food Science, Universidad de Extremadura</li> <li>• Universidad de Ceneval (México), SIC</li> <li>• Universidad de Granada, VERIFICA</li> <li>• Universidad de Castilla la Mancha, ACREDITA</li> <li>• Teaching Advisory Committee (CAD) of the Degree in Spanish Language and Hispanic Literature, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria</li> <li>• Open University, SIC</li> </ul>



SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, SIC</li> </ul>
	13.15-14.30 (75 min)	Lunch (panel only)	
15 ONLINE	14.30-15.30 (60 min)	Meeting with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director of the University Quality and Prospective Agency of Aragon</li> <li>Universidad Miguel Hernández, State University Student Council (CEUNE).</li> <li>Lecturer at the University of Zaragoza, representing FECCOO</li> <li>Education and Training Department of the CEOE</li> <li>Advisory Council for Institutional and Programme Evaluation, Instituto de Ingeniería de España</li> <li>Advisory Council for Institutional and Programme Evaluation, Universidad de Oviedo</li> </ul>
	15.30-16.00 (30 min)	Review panel's private discussion	
16 IN PERSON	16.00-16.45 (45 min)	Meeting with ministry representatives: - Representative from the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Universities - Representative of the office of the Ministry for finance in charge of financial audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director General of the Technical Cabinet, Ministry of Universities</li> <li>State Comptroller, Ministry of Finance</li> </ul>
	16.45-17.15 (30 min)	Review panel's private discussion	
17 MIXED	17.15-18.15 (up to 60 min, as needed)	A session to further investigate additional topics that may arise during the site visit regarding agency's compliance with the ESG (as necessary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director</li> <li>Manager</li> <li>Coordinator of Programmes and Institutional Evaluation of Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit</li> </ul>

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Manager of ACREDITA Grade and Master Procedure and Project Manager of INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION</li> <li>• Project Manager of VERIFICA and MONITOR Bachelor and Master</li> </ul>
18	18.15-19.15 (60 min)	Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation for day 3 and provisional conclusions	
	20.00	Dinner (panel only)	
26.05.2022 – Day 3			
19	09.00-11.30 (90 min)	Private meeting between panel members to agree on the main findings	
20	11.30-12.30 (60 min)	Preparation for the de-briefing meeting	
21 MIXED	12.30-13.00 (30 min)	Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• Manager</li> <li>• Coordinator of Programmes and Institutional Evaluation</li> <li>• Coordinator of CNEAI Procedure</li> <li>• President of the Internationalisation Committee</li> <li>• Head of Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit</li> <li>• Officer of Prospective and Continuous Improvement Unit</li> <li>• Officer of Programmes and Institutional Evaluation</li> </ul>
	13.00-14.00 (60 min)	Lunch (panel only)	

## ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

# Targeted review of National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) against the ESG

## Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The present Terms of Reference were agreed between ANECA (applicant), The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) (coordinator) and EQAR.

### 1. Background

National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation-ANECA has been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 01/11/2012 and is applying for renewal of EQAR registration based on a targeted external review against *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* coordinated by The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation-ANECA has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2003 and is applying for renewal of ENQA membership.

ANECA is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Programme level
  - VERIFICA
  - MONITOR
  - ACREDITA
  - International Quality Labels (SIC): (\*)
    - EUR-ACE
    - Euro-Inf
    - EUROBACHELOR / EUROMASTER
  - Joint programme accreditation
- Institutional level
  - AUDIT
  - INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION
  - DOCENTIA

- AUDIT INTERNATIONAL

All these activities will be included on the agency's profile on the EQAR website and linked to DEQAR database. *NB: The agency may not upload reports from other activities to DEQAR.*

*(\*) Additional activities of ANECA are currently in the design phase, i.e. WFME and ENPHI international labels. ANECA is required to make a Substantive Change Report once the design phase is concluded. Should the design phase be concluded before the targeted review takes place, these activities should be addressed to the extent possible.*

The following activities of the applicant are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Academic Staff Recruitment Assessment Programme (PEP)
- ACADEMIA
- CNEAI
- International projects
- Other assessments that do not relate to teaching & learning in higher education

While these activities are not relevant to the application for renewal on EQAR, the review should address how ANECA ensures a clear distinction between external quality assurance within the scope of the ESG and these other fields of work; see also partial compliance with ESG 3.1 in ANECA's last renewal.

Further to that, it is ANECA's choice – in agreement with the review coordinator – whether those activities should be commented upon by the review panel.

## **2. Purpose and scope of the targeted review**

This review will evaluate the extent to which ANECA continues to fulfil the requirements of the ESG. The targeted review aims to place more focus on those parts that require attention and provide sufficient information to support ANECA's application to EQAR.

The review will be further used as part of the agency's renewal of membership in ENQA.

### **2.1 Focus areas**

5. Standards with a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision:
  - a. *ESG 2.6 Reporting*
  - b. *ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance*
6. Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the following activities:

a. AUDIT INTERNATIONAL

b. INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

7. ESG 2.1 *Consideration of internal quality assurance* for all activities within the scope of the ESG;

8. Selected enhancement area: *ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct*

9. Other matters regarding ESG compliance that come up during the targeted review and that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG (if any).

These issues should be investigated by the review panel as far as possible, providing an analysis and conclusion on the ESG standard(s) concerned.

### 3. The review process

The review will be conducted in line with the requirements of *the EQAR Procedures for Applications* and *the Policy on Targeted Reviews*, and following the methodology described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Agreement on the Terms of Reference between EQAR, ANECA and The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel by The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);
- Self-assessment by ANECA including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to ANECA;
- Preparation and completion of the final review report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final review report by ENQA's Agency Review Committee;
- Analysis of the final review report and decision-making by the EQAR Register Committee;
- Decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board;
- Attendance to the online follow-up seminar.

#### 3.1 Independence of the review coordinator

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) has not provided remunerated (e.g. consultancy) or unremunerated services to ANECA during the past 5 years, and conversely ANECA has not provided any remunerated or unremunerated services to The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

### **3.2 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review panel consists of at least 3 members including an academic employed by a higher education institution, a student member and one other expert. At least one of the three members is from another country.

The third panel member should be a quality assurance professional that is currently employed by a QA agency and has been engaged in quality assurance within the past five years. When requested by the agency under review or when considered particularly pertinent, a second quality assurance professional or other stakeholders (for example, a representative of the labour market) may be included in addition to the three panel members. In this case, an additional fee is charged to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses.

One of the members serves as the chair of the review panel, and one as the review secretary. At least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. At least two panel members come from outside the national system of the agency under review (if relevant).

The panel will be supported by the ENQA Review Coordinator (an ENQA staff member) who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA's requirements are met throughout the process. The Review Coordinator will not be the secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide the agency with the proposed panel composition and the curricula vitae of the panel members to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The reviewers will have to agree to a non-conflict of interest statement that is incorporated in their contract for the review of this agency.

Once appointed, The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) will inform EQAR about the appointed panel members.

### **3.3 Self-assessment by ANECA, including the preparation of a self-assessment report**

ANECA is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;

The self-assessment report is expected to contain:

- a description of the self-assessment process and the production of the SAR;
- a description of changes occurred within the agency since the last full review, including any eventual changes in the higher education system and quality assurance system in which the agency predominantly operates, the agency's structure, funding, its list of external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG, as well as the changes in the agency's quality assurance activities abroad (where relevant);
- a section that addresses the focus areas of the review, including standards that were considered to be partially compliant with the ESG in the last full review as well as ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (see 2.1 Focus areas);
- a SWOT analysis of the agency as a whole;
- for each of the individual standards enlisted above (see section 2) a consideration of how the agency has addressed the recommendations as noted in the previous EQAR Register Committee decision of inclusion/renewal (if applicable).

The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which ANECA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and continues to meet the ESG and thus the requirements for EQAR registration.

The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat, which has two weeks to carry out a screening. The purpose of a screening is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but rather whether or not the necessary information, as outlined in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*, is present. If the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to ask for a revised version within two weeks.

The final version of the agency's self-assessment report is then submitted to the review panel a minimum of eight weeks prior to the site visit. The agency publishes the completed SAR on its website and sends the link to ENQA. ENQA will publish this link on its website as well.

### **3.4 A site visit by the review panel**

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule considering the aspects included under the focus area (as defined under point 2.1 of the Terms of Reference).

The schedule will include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit. The approved schedule

shall be given to ANECA at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The site visit should enable the review panel to explore how the agency has addressed the standards where it has been found to be partially compliant (if the case), aspects of substantive change, consideration of internal quality assurance (ESG 2.1) and the self-selected ESG standard(s) for enhancement. The panel will include extra time during the site-visit to address any other arising issues (if the case) that might have an impact on the agency's compliance with the ESG.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on the ESG compliance of the agency.

Prior to the physical site visit, the panel attends a joint briefing call between the panel, The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and EQAR to clarify the review expectations and address any possible arising matters.

In advance of the site visit (at least two weeks before the site visit), the panel will organise an obligatory online meeting with the agency. This meeting is held to ensure that the panel reaches a sufficient understanding of:

- The specific national/legal context in which the agency operates;
- The specific quality assurance system to which the agency belongs;
- The key characteristics of the agency's external QA activities.

### **3.5 Preparation and completion of the final review report**

The review report will be drafted in consultation with all review panel members and correspond to the purpose and scope of the review as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. In particular, it will provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each ESG. When preparing the report, the review panel should bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG* to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR<sup>4</sup>.

The external report will present the facts and analysis reflecting the reality at the time of review. This will form the main basis for the Register Committee's decision making.

A draft will first be submitted to the ENQA Review Coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity, and language. After panel has considered coordinator's feedback, the report will go to the agency for comment on factual accuracy. If ANECA chooses to provide a position statement in reference to the draft report, it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report.

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<sup>4</sup> See here: <https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/UseAndInterpretationOfTheESGv2.0-2015.pdf>



Thereafter, the review panel will take into account the statement by ANECA and submit the document for scrutiny to ENQA's Agency Review Committee and then to EQAR along with the remaining application documents (self-evaluation report, Declaration of Honour, statement to review report-if applicable). The report is to be finalised normally within 2-4 months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 30 pages in length. All panel will sign off on the final version of the external review report. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) will provide to ANECA the [Declaration of Honour](#) together with the final report.

#### **4. Publication and use of the report**

ANECA will receive the expert panel's report and publish it on its website once the ENQA Agency Review Committee has validated the report. Prior to the final validation of the report, the ENQA Agency Review Committee may request additional (documentary) evidence or clarification from the review panel, review coordinator or the agency if needed. The review report will be published on ENQA website regardless of the review outcome. The report will also be published on the EQAR website together with the decision on registration, regardless of the outcome.

ENQA will retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the review panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, will be vested in ENQA. In the case of an unsuccessful application to EQAR, the report may also be used by the ENQA Board to reach a conclusion on whether the agency can be admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA.

#### **5. Decision-making on EQAR registration and ENQA membership**

The agency will submit the review report via email to EQAR before expiry of the agency's registration on EQAR. The agency will also include its self-assessment report (in a PDF format), the Declaration of Honour and any other relevant documents to the application to EQAR (i.e. annexes, statement to the review report).

EQAR is expected to consider the review report and the agency's application at its Register Committee meeting in February/March 2023. The Register Committee's final judgement on the agency's compliance with the ESG as a whole can either be substantially compliant (approval of the application) or not substantially compliant (rejection of the application). In case of a positive decision (substantially compliant with the ESG), the registration is renewed for a further five years (from the date of the review report).

The decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board will take place after EQAR Register Committee decision.

To apply for ENQA membership, the agency is requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation for applying for membership

and the ways in which the agency expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be considered by the Board together with the confirmation of EQAR listing when deciding on the agency's membership. Should the agency not be granted the registration in EQAR or the registration is not renewed, the decision on ENQA membership will be taken based on the final review report, the application letter, and the statement from the Agency Review Committee. The decision on membership will be published on ENQA's website.

## 6. Indicative schedule of the review

Agreement on Terms of Reference	October 2021
Appointment of review panel members	November 2021
Self-assessment report (SAR) completed by ANECA	28 February 2022
Screening of SAR by ENQA Review Coordinator	March 2022
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	April 2022
Briefing of review panel members	April 2022
Review panel site visit	Late May 2022
Submission of the draft review report to ENQA Review Coordinator	Late June 2022
Factual check of the review report by the ANECA	July 2022
Statement of ANECA to review panel (if applicable)	July 2022
Submission of review report to The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)	August 2022
Validation of the review report by the Agency Review Committee	October 2022
EQAR Register Committee meeting and decision on the application by ANECA	February/March 2023
Decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board	April 2023

## ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	external quality assurance
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	<i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015</i>
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
IQA	internal quality assurance
ISQA	Internal system of quality assurance
QA	quality assurance
SAR	self-assessment report

## ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

### I. DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY ANECA

- I.1. Self-assessment report (of 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2022) with embedded links to related documents
- I.2. Short explanation to the panel on ANECA's expectations on ESG 3.6 in the targeted review

### II. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY ANECA, BEFORE AND DURING THE VISIT, ON REQUEST OF THE REVIEW PANEL

- II.1. A list with ANECA's activities, their denomination in Spanish and the corresponding bodies in both languages (Spanish and English), with a direct link, for each, to the page where full expert reports are published
- II.2. A complement to Table 3/ page 10 of the SAR with the proportion of share of activities ANECA currently undertakes, among national program accreditation/AUDIT and international AUDIT
- II.3. The indicators defined in each of the processes which are measured and regularly revised/ modified, designed to assess the degree of achievement of the objectives set annually by the Agency
- II.4. A summary in English of the Annual activity report for 2021
- II.5. A couple of reports for AUDIT International (at least one from a successful procedure and another from a non-successful one – if available) and Institutional accreditation (if this procedure has as outcome a report other than the decision we could find published on the website)
- II.6. The typical schedule of site visits (a few examples) – for AUDIT International and Institutional accreditation
- II.7. Document stating the expert panel selection/ composition principles for the new procedures
- II.8. Table with statistics from the last 2-3 years on experts hired: by year, procedure, nationality/ country of residence, gender
- II.9. Details about writing the reports that are published, for each of ANECA's activities within the scope of the ESG
- II.10. Examples of appeals and/ or complaints against ANECA evaluation activities within the scope of ESGs, if any, since the last review

### III. OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL

ANECA's website: <http://www.aneca.es>

## ENQA TARGETED REVIEW 2022

THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Targeted Review of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA), undertaken in 2022.

**enqa.**

European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education